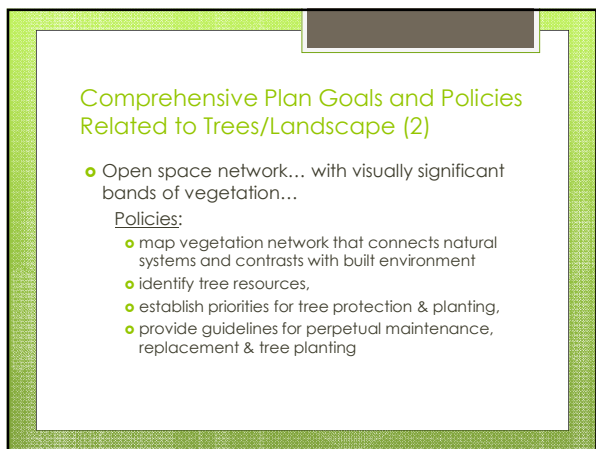Current Tukwila Tree Policies & Regulations

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Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies Related to Trees/Landscape (1)

- Vegetated hillsides and freeway corridors
- Small town feel in residential neighborhoods – trees and lawns, street trees
- Attractive commercial development with streetscape plantings, landscaping in between
- Transportation corridors with prominent plantings (trees along streets & in parking lots)

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies Related to Trees/Landscape (2)

- Open space network… with visually significant bands of vegetation…
  Policies:
  - map vegetation network that connects natural systems and contrasts with built environment
  - identify tree resources,
  - establish priorities for tree protection & planting,
  - provide guidelines for perpetual maintenance, replacement & tree planting

Tukwila Tree Regulations

- TMC 18.54, adopted 1995 – only two minor amendments over the past 18 years.

- Primary ordinance that regulates trees in the City, but limited to sensitive areas and shoreline. Does not regulate landscape or street trees.

Other Regulations that Govern Trees and Other Vegetation

- Shoreline Master Program
- Sensitive Areas Ordinance
- Landscape Code
- Public Right-of-Way Code (street trees)
- Subdivision/Design Review codes
- Various plans for street trees (CBD, TIB)

What is Regulated/Requires a Permit?

- Removal of significant* (*over 4 inches in diameter*) trees and understory vegetation in:
  - sensitive areas (*wetlands, watercourses, fish and wildlife habitat areas, steep slopes and buffers*) and
  - the shoreline (*Green/Duwamish River and Black River*)

* Cottonwoods are not significant trees

What is Not Regulated/No Permit Required?

- Trees outside of sensitive areas or the shoreline
- Removal of up to 4 trees in any 36 month period on steep slopes on single family zoned properties
- Removal of hazardous trees (*structural defect or disease or interference with safe vision or traffic flow, or causes threat to life or property*)
- Routine maintenance, removal of noxious weeds
- Construction and maintenance of streets and utilities in ROW and easements

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Requirements

- Permit application: site plan, tree inventory (or canopy cover assessment), landscape/tree replacement plan, evaluation of tree viability & tree protection measures
- Evidence of insurance for tree removal when hazard to human life or adjoining property
- Financial guarantee for replacement and to mitigate damage

Standards (1)

- Retain "as many trees as possible"
- Priority: protect existing stands of trees, perimeter trees, healthy mature trees
- Protect understory vegetation within essential root zone of protected trees
- Tree protection measures per best management practices plus protective fencing

Standards (2)

- Tree replacement per required ratios (depends on diameter of trees being removed – no ratios for understory), or a canopy approach.
- Minimum replacement sizes (2.5 inch caliper deciduous trees; 6-8 feet evergreen trees; 24 inch shrubs; 1 gallon groundcovers).
- Smaller replacement plant sizes allowed

Exceptions

- Compliance results in undue hardship, such as reasonable use of property jeopardized (City may specify conditions)
- Site can't support required number of replacement trees (up to 75/acre, max). Off-site planting or equivalent contribution in funds or labor/materials for off-site planting required.

Violations and Enforcement

- Violation = clearing, planting, relocation, maintenance without permit or not in accordance with issued permit
- City inspection of property, stop work order, or civil action allowed
- Mitigation required if vegetation cleared without permit – planting that complies with standards

Issues/Problems with Implementing Current Tree Regulations (1)

- Lack of in-house expertise & staff time for tree management
- Confusing language about where rules apply
- Overlaps/contradictions with SAO and Shoreline regulations
- No clear requirement to retain trees on steep slopes = loss of canopy on slopes

Issues/Problems with Implementing Current Tree Regulations (2)

- Difficult to enforce on single family properties
- Lack of standards for tree selection, planting and maintenance practices = unhealthy trees & wrong tree wrong place
- No requirement for "in-kind" replacement = smaller trees are planted
- No mechanism to monitor health of planted trees = we don't know if trees survived

Policy Issues for Consideration (1)

- Regulate tree removal and protection
  - on all properties?
  - only on undeveloped sites or sites over a certain size?
  - only if over a certain number of trees?

If no:

- Institute education and incentive programs for trees outside of shoreline and sensitive areas instead of regulating?
- Find grant funds to cost share or give away trees?
- Find grant funding to provide low cost tree evaluation and consultation to residents?

Policy Issues for Consideration (2)

- Improve retention of trees on slopes – require retention of certain % of healthy trees or protection of tree groves?
- Improve consideration of tree role in slope stabilization for new development?
- Require in-kind tree replacement
- Require variable replacement ratios (i.e. more trees if small)?
- Require protection of existing trees, wherever feasible for all utility infrastructure repair and installation projects

Policy Issues for Consideration (3)

- Require submittal of monitoring/ maintenance reports for replaced trees & City inspections?
- Assign penalties for violations based on monetary value of trees removed in addition to replacement requirements?
- Define "certified arborist" and require ISA risk assessments for hazard tree evaluation (except where hazard is obvious)?

Policy Issues for Consideration (4)

- Protect more than just "significant trees" (i.e. younger trees, multi-trunked trees, native vegetation)?
- Consider tree health/stage of tree maturity in decision-making for retention?
- Adopt standards for tree protection and proper pruning & prohibit topping (except where there are overhead wires)?

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